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SLUMS FOR EVERYBODY

In the early 1950's, the federal government spent $36.8 million to convert a 55-acre area of St. Louis (formerly known as the Kerry Patch slum) into a high-rise apartment city for low-income workers.

The project, named Pruitt-Igoe, was originally planned as two separate housing facilities. The Pruitt was to be a complex of 20 buildings, 11-stories high, for Negroes only. The Igoe was to be 13 buildings for whites only.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed a lawsuit against the St. Louis Housing Authority for fostering segregation. NAACP won the suit; and Pruitt-Igoe was built for integrated occupancy.

The 33 11-story buildings contain 2755 dwelling units. On 4 floors of each building there are "laundry galleries" complete with space for small children to play while mothers do the family wash. There is an abundance of beautified parkways, gardens, open spaces, playgrounds.

When the 55-acre patch of man-made heaven known as Pruitt-Igoe was completed in 1954, it was widely acclaimed a spectacular accomplishment which proved that lavish spending of tax money could create paradise. Architectural journals extravagantly praised Pruitt-Igoe for the economy, the uniqueness, the beauty of its design. Liberal uplifters and planners of other people's lives pointed to it with triumph. Government planning and spending had converted the ugly old Kerry Patch slum into a showplace where black and white would live together in tax-subsidized bliss.

The St. Louis Housing Authority set rents on a sliding scale: those with the lowest incomes paid the lowest rents; those who earned more paid more; but persons with incomes above a specified level were excluded. The Authority controlled the influx of tenants by reserving a certain percentage of units for each economic level accommodated. Only 10% of the units were available for unemployed persons on relief.

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Though the NAACP had won its lawsuit to force integration, Pruitt-Igoe was never integrated. White people stayed away, and the 2755 dwelling units were quickly taken by Negroes.

All seemed to go well for a while — until the late 1950's when the Housing Authority yielded to pressure, by the overburdened St. Louis Welfare Department, to accept more reliefers as tenants in Pruitt-Igoe.

By 1968, two-thirds of the 10,000 Negroes living in Pruitt-Igoe were on welfare — mostly families of illegitimates, or families deserted by fathers. Pruitt-Igoe had become a cancer in the heart of St. Louis, an indescribable cesspool of filth, fear, obscenity, and crime.

Vandals keep elevators out of order most of the time. Stairs, landings, halls and yards reek of human offal, and are littered with garbage, beer cans, broken wine bottles, assorted trash. Rape, robbery, and assault — in the buildings and on the grounds — are commonplace.

The laundry galleries have been largely taken over by hoodlums who do not live in the project, but who are attracted by the women who reside there. Areas where children were supposed to play while mothers did the laundry are now foul and cluttered dens where men and women drink, gamble, fight, and engage in sexual acts in full view of children or whoever else happens to be around.

Larry Fields, *Globe-Democrat* reporter who wrote a full-page feature on Pruitt-Igoe, called the project a "local and national disgrace." One elderly woman tenant told him she has not dared to go outside her apartment in 3 years. Violence and obscene disorder disturb her continuously, but she is afraid to call the police — afraid the police will be hurt; afraid the hoodlums will discover that she reported them.

Another woman told Mr. Fields:

"It was wonderful when we moved here . . . . We all used to be neighbors, and we all cared about the place. But now, there are so many people who live here like animals.

"They throw bottles out of the windows, and they let their kids run around wild. Just the other day, a group of them set fire in the hallway and were having a barbecue . . . . And then, when they were through, they just left all their dirt behind, the bones and the burnt wood and bottles."(1)

Larry Fields interviewed Dr. Lee Rainwater, professor of sociology and anthropology at Washington University. Dr. Rainwater has a solution for the nation's slum problems. He suggests that the government give all poor people a guaranteed annual income, and lend them enough money to buy their own homes, wherever they please.(1)

Obviously, the lesson of Pruitt-Igoe is lost on Dr. Rainwater. Slums do not make people. It is the other way around. People make slums. Dr. Rainwater's scheme could make a Pruitt-Igoe of every neighborhood in the country.

The open-housing section of the 1968 civil rights bill forces people to sell or rent houses to whoever comes along. The government will take enough money away from you to provide the rent or the purchase money, and to guarantee your new neighbors enough annual income to buy booze, beer, clothes, and food. What will you do about the wild, drunken orgies they stage in the very presence of your families? What will you do about the swarms of illegitimates they will breed and turn loose in your neighborhoods, to roam uncontrolled like animals, littering, vandalizing, stealing, assaulting, robbing, and raping?

Perhaps Dr. Rainwater's scheme should cause us no anxiety, if it were only his scheme; but that is not the case. Rainwater's scheme is, basically, the scheme of powerful politicians like Robert F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon, Eugene McCarthy, Hubert Humphrey, Nelson Rockefeller, Lyndon Johnson. It is the scheme of powerful union bosses like Walter Reuther. It is the scheme of all prominent civil rights leaders. It is essentially the scheme of influential religious organizations like the National Conference of Catholic Charities, the American Jewish Congress, the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, the National Council of Churches, the National Board of the

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Young Women's Christian Association. It is the scheme of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference whose leaders (successors to Martin Luther King) are conducting the poor people's march on Washington; and it is the scheme of President Johnson's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Riot Commission).

The Riot Commission recommended a guaranteed annual income, plus subsidized housing and a multitude of other benefits, for everyone who chooses not to work and for everyone who works but does not earn enough money ("enough" being a figure not yet specifically defined, but generally considered to be about $5000 a year income for a family of 4).

The Commission condemned the present system of public welfare as designed "to save money instead of people," and as operating "to remind recipients that they are considered untrustworthy, promiscuous, and lazy." The Commission alleged that whites created the slums Negroes live in, that whites ignore or condone horrible living conditions of Negroes, and that middle-class whites are unwilling to tax themselves for adequate help to Negroes — alleged that little has been done for the "ghetto poor" in the United States.

All of which is an outright lie.

From 1935 to the end of 1966, the federal government spent more than $421 billion on programs designed to aid, train, rehabilitate the nation's poor.[2] Most of the money was taken from middle-class whites. The spending not only continues, but increases with accelerating speed every year. From 1960 to the end of 1966, federal spending for welfare and health programs increased 210%, while U. S. population grew 10%.[3] The rate of increase on health and welfare spending during 1967 was vastly greater than the rate of increase during the 1960-66 period.

The federal government alone is now spending about $59 billion a year to help the nation's poor[4] — a sum which does not include the astronomical amounts spent on the poor by city, county, and state governments.

Negroes constitute about 11% of the population, but get 40% of the tax money spent on welfare.

Washington, D. C., is a classic case for study. In 1950, when Washington was 2/3 white, the city's budget was $98 million. Academically, its schools rated with the best in the nation. Crime rates were lower than those of most other cities of comparable size. There were areas where housing was shabby and residents were careless about the appearance of their neighborhood (as in every other city of the world); but there were no vast slum sections where filth, crime, and tax-subsidized idleness were the most conspicuous features of life.

In 1968, the total population of Washington is only 25,000 greater than it was 18 years ago; but now the population is 2/3 Negro; and the city's budget is $450 million — which does not include additional billions of tax money being poured into the city by the federal government for urban renewal, rent supplements, public housing, welfare, poverty war operations, manpower training, freeway construction.

Negroes constitute 92% of the enrollment in District schools, which now rate, academically, among the lowest in the nation. Many of the schools are stews of crime and violence, where the educational process is virtually nonexistent. Yet, the District schools cost more now than they did in 1950 when they were among the best in the nation. For example, the District schools have a greater number of professional staff per 1000 students than the schools of any other city of comparable size.[5]

Negroes get 80% of the "free" medical care at the D.C. General Hospital. The cost to taxpayers of providing this "free" medical service to Negroes in this one hospital in the District is more than $19 million a year. Approximately 90% of all welfare funds in the District goes to Negroes.[5]

In recent years, Congress has appropriated huge amounts of money for playgrounds, swimming

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pools, recreation projects — primarily for the benefit of Negroes. Job-training programs, poverty programs, and summer-employment programs have been directed almost exclusively for the benefit of Negroes.[5]

The Mayor of Washington is a Negro. More than 55% of all employees of the District government are Negroes (and the percentage would be higher if more Negroes would accept employment). More than 30% of all federal employees in the District are Negroes.[6]

Yet, the Reverend Ralph Abernathy's delegation of "poor people" — on the first day of their march on Washington (April 29) — told the Secretary of Agriculture that Washington is a "slave city," because so little has been done for the poor.[7]

Today, Washington is a hellhole of crime and mob violence. Vast sections of this once-lovely city have been converted into sloughs of filth by the people who live there at taxpayers' expense.

Liberals who control the federal government are financing, with our money, this rape and degradation of the nation's capital.

The answer? The only way to save our country is to stop all unconstitutional spending by the federal government and stop federal court interference and dictation in state and local affairs — thus leaving private individuals and state and local governments the responsibility and the resources to manage their own affairs and to enforce the laws, without regard to race or political affiliation.

It can be done, if we will elect a Congress and a President who will do it.

FOOTNOTES

(1) "The Separate World of Pruitt-Igoe," by Larry Fields, St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, Apr. 27-8, 1968, Sec. C, p. 1

(2) *Historical Statistics Of The United States, Colonial Times To* 1957, U. S. Department of Commerce, 1960, p. 194; *Statistical Abstract* (s) *Of The United States*, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1959 — p. 266; 1962 — pp. 274-5, 1965 — p. 282, 1966 — p. 281

(3) "Conclusions," editorial, *The Dallas Morning News*, July 25, 1967, p. D2

(4) "Any Answer To Riots?", *U.S. News & World Report*, Apr. 29, 1968, pp. 34-6

(5) "What's Wrong With A 'Poor People's March,'; Interview With Robert C. Byrd, Senator From West Virginia," *U.S. News & World Report*, May 6, 1968, pp. 72-3

(6) "Aftermath Of Riots — What Next?", *U.S. News & World Report*, Apr. 22, 1968, pp. 27-30

(7) Article by Charles Conconi, *The* (Wash., D.C.) *Evening Star*, Apr. 29, 1968, pp. A1,6

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